

WH66150H

**Title:** UNGA 68: Leaders Week: Obama to host civil society meeting  
**MRN:** WH66150H 11/09/2013 07:19:36 PM EDT  
**To:** Canberra  
**Cc:** RR : Abuja, Accra, Ankara, Brasilia, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Copenhagen, Dublin, Geneva UN, Jakarta, London, Manila, Mexico City, Moscow, Nairobi, Ottawa, Pretoria, Santiago De Chile, Seoul, Stockholm, The Hague, Tokyo, UN New York, Vienna UN, Warsaw, Zagreb  
**From:** Washington  
**From File:**  
**References:** The cable has the following attachment/s -  
Save the Date for HLE on Supporting Civil Society.docx First 3 attachments omitted  
Civil society invitees.pdf as irrelevant to request  
Countries invited.pdf  
Draft joint statement.pdf  
**Response:** Routine, Information Only

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**Comments:**  
s 22 1(a)(ii)

#### Summary

On 23 September, President Obama will host a meeting in the margins of UNGA to discuss growing restrictions on civil society. Thirty six countries will be invited (including Australia); all are members of the Open Government Partnership, the Community of Democracies and/or the Lifeline Fund. The event is intended to kickstart better coordination of existing mechanisms that seek to support and strengthen civil society. Event organisers are planning for Obama, UNSG Ban, the presidents of Mexico and Mongolia and a civil society representative to make remarks, followed by an informal question and answer session. A joint statement will be released.

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We attended a briefing today (11 September) at the White House on a meeting President Obama will host on the margins of UNGA to discuss growing restrictions on civil society.

2. The White House said the United States would co-host the meeting with Mexico and Mongolia, both 'strong partners' of the United States on civil society issues through the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the Community of Democracies (CD). The hour-long event would be held in the afternoon of 23 September at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel (no further details on timing were provided). Thirty six countries had been sent save-the-date messages (attached) - all were members of the OGP, CD and/or the Lifeline Fund. Formal invitations (addressed to heads of government) would be sent to missions in New York by 13 September. The White House said it was aware some countries might not be represented at UNGA at head of government level and was comfortable with ministerial or senior official representation. Representatives from civil society organisations and private foundations were also invited (guest lists attached).

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3. The White House said the aim of the event was to kickstart better coordination of existing mechanisms that seek to support and strengthen civil society, such as the OGP, CD and Lifeline. In particular, the event would focus on how participants could work together to:

- improve the policy environment for CSOs (led by the OGP)
- coordinate multilateral and diplomatic pressure (led by CD)
- identify new and innovative ways of providing technical, financial and logistical support to civil society (with Lifeline highlighted as an example).

4. The White House said Obama would open the event. UN Secretary-General Ban would speak next, followed by the presidents of Mexico (as future OGP co-chair) and Mongolia (as past CD president), along with a civil society representative (yet to be determined). Remarks would be limited to five minutes each. The rest of the event would be an informal question and answer session, with no allocated speaking slots. There would be no order of precedence and questions could be asked of anyone at the event.

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6. The White House provided a draft joint statement to be released at the event (attached). The White House clarified that the statement was not 'for review', although countries could submit (minor) suggested changes. The White House asked that countries indicate support for the statement by 19 September. There was a reference in the statement to enhancing support for the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. State told the meeting that US embassies would demarche our capitals later this week or early next week to encourage increased financial support for the Special Rapporteur.

7. The White House asked for RSVPs by 19 September. Delegations would be principal plus two. In addition to Obama, the White House said UN Permanent Representative Power and/or Secretary Kerry might also attend. There would be pooled press at the beginning of the event. The White House had not decided if there would be a greeting session at the beginning of the event, but there would not be a group photo.

text ends

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## **Draft Joint Statement on the Promotion and Protection of Civil Society**

We, the governments of the United States, [insert other governments], as participants in the Community of Democracies and the Open Government Partnership, and supporters of the Lifeline Fund, met on September 23 along with representatives of civil society, the philanthropic community, the private sector, and the United Nations on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Our purpose was to coordinate action to promote and protect civil society in the face of ongoing assault around the world. We affirmed that the strength and vibrancy of nations depends on an active civil society and robust engagement between governments and civil society to advance shared goals of peace, prosperity, and the well-being of all citizens. We noted our deep concern that many governments are restricting civil society and the rights of freedom of association and expression, both online and offline.

To combat this alarming trend, our nations committed to work together to respond to growing restrictions on civil society that undermine its ability to perform its crucial role. We will ensure effective coordination of the multiple efforts already underway toward this end, including through the U.N. system, the Community of Democracies, the Open Government Partnership, and Lifeline, and commit to strengthen our support for these existing mechanisms. We will enhance our support for the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. We will lead by example to promote laws, policy decisions, and practices that foster a supportive environment for civil society, and speak out against legislation and administrative measures that impede efforts of civil society. We will undertake joint diplomatic action whenever necessary to support civil society in countries where it is under threat, and to defend the fundamental freedoms of association and peaceful assembly.

We will also work to develop new and innovative ways of providing technical, financial, and logistical support to promote and protect the right of citizens and civil society to freely associate, meaningfully engage with government, and constructively participate in processes to improve the well-being of their countries. Throughout all of these efforts, our nations will continue to engage with representatives of civil society to help us understand and respond to the challenges they confront.

We commit to gather again at the opening of the 69th United Nations General Assembly to review our progress toward these objectives. We will work in concert over the coming year to ensure a robust, effective international response to the proliferation of restrictions being placed on civil society. We call on representatives of civil society, the philanthropic community, the private sector, and other governments to partner with us in supporting and defending civil society.

s 22 1(a)(ii)

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii) @ausaid.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Friday, 20 September 2013 1:41 PM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** RE: UNGA 68: US joint statement on the promotion and protection of civil society  
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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I have liaised with the NGO Policy Section regarding the outcome statement and I'm pleased say there are no objections to the wording of the draft joint statement from our point of view, though I note that this will be subject to the new Government's priorities.

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Thanks,

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The Australian Government is committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals



s 22 1(a)(ii)

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)

**Sent:** Friday, 20 September 2013 10:11 AM

**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii)

**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii)

**Subject:** UNGA 68: US joint statement on the promotion and protection of civil society [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Mornings 22 1(a)(ii)

This one is for leader's week (23 -27 Sept) in the upcoming UN General Assembly session.

The US are hosting an event on the promotion and protection of civil society (agenda attached) and are proposing to issue a joint statement afterwards. They have forwarded through the attached draft and asked if we would like to join on – but are not looking to enter into textual negotiations.

The draft statement is uncontroversial and we are proposing to join but just wanted to run it by your respective departments first.

The US has requested we get back to them by this afternoon so I would ask for your confirmation by 3pm.

Happy to discuss and apologies for the tight turn around.

Cheers

s 22 1(a)(ii)

s 22 1(a)(ii)

Desk Officer

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s 22 1(a)(ii)

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Friday, 20 September 2013 10:06 AM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** Campbell, Noel; s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** FW: Further details on UNGA civil society meeting to be hosted by President Obama [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Attachments:** Draft Joint Statement - UNGA Civil Society Event 9-18 final.docx; Draft Joint Statement - UNGA Civil Society Event 9-18.docx; High Level Event on Supporting Civil Society.docx

All

Below is further information from Washington on the Obama Civil Society event that I understand Harinder will attend.

They have asked whether we wish to join the joint statement to be presented at the event. Our initial reading is yes and we will confirm this position with relevant agencies this morning.

s22 1(a)(ii) grateful if a copy of this joint statement could be added to Harinder's pack (and we can chat about what further detail contained below she might also welcome!)

Many thanks, s 22 1(a)(ii)

s 22 1(a)(ii)  
Executive Officer  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 19 September 2013 1:31 PM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii) King, Philippa; Gee, Stephen; s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** Further details on UNGA civil society meeting to be hosted by President Obama [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s 22 1(a)(ii)

As you know, on 23 September, President Obama will host a meeting in New York to discuss growing restrictions on civil society (WH66150H). The White House held a further briefing today. Key takeaways were:

**Order of events (run through attached)**

- President Obama will attend the entire event (one hour).

- Obama, UN Secretary General, Mexico President, Mongolia President, UN Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association, a representative from Myanmar CSO Triangle Women's Support, and President of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law will all make 5 minute remarks
- This will leave 25 minutes for an 'open dialogue' moderated by Obama. s22 1(a)(ii)  
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Attached is the final text of the **joint statement** (a tracked changes and a clean copy are attached). We need to let the United States know by tomorrow if we wish to sign on.

Let me know if you have any questions

Best

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**The High Level Event on Supporting Civil Society**  
**New York**  
**September 23, 2013**  
**3:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

New York Hilton  
Grand Ball Room, Hilton Hotel

**Sequence of Events**

**President Barack Obama, United States**

*An intensive global effort to defend, support, and sustain civil society*

**U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**

*Harnessing the United Nations to promote and protect civil society*

**President Enrique Peña Nieto, Mexico**

*The Open Government Partnership: redefining the relationship between governments and civil society*

**President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, Mongolia**

*The Community of Democracies: a global platform for action to empower civil society*

**U.N. Special Rapporteur Maina Kiai, Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association**

*Sounding the Alarm: emerging threats to civil society and the need for a coordinated international response*

**Ms. Khin Lay, Burma**

*Creating a supportive policy environment for civil society: an activist's perspective*

**Mr. Douglas Rutzen, President, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law and Lifeline Consortium Partner**

*Living up to our values: conclusions and the road ahead*

s 22 1(a)(ii)

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Friday, 20 September 2013 11:19 AM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** FW: UNGA 68: US joint statement on the promotion and protection of civil society [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

s 22 – fine with me. s22 1(a)(ii) Does the online/offline language only apply to the freedoms or does it also apply to 'restricting civil society' (in which case what does restricting civil society online mean?). s 22 1(a)(ii)

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Friday, 20 September 2013 10:37 AM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** UNGA 68: US joint statement on the promotion and protection of civil society [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s 22 1(a)(ii)

The US are hosting an event on the promotion and protection of civil society (agenda attached) during the upcoming leaders week of the UN General Assembly. They are proposing to issue the attached joint statement afterwards. The statement is uncontroversial and we are proposing to join but it contains the below sentence on cyber that I wanted to run by you first.

We need to get back to the US this arvo so grateful if you could confirm if you were happy by 3pm.

Happy to discuss and apologies for the tight turn around.

Cheers  
s 22 1(a)(ii)

From para three – “We noted our deep concern that many governments are restricting civil society and the rights of freedom of association and expression, both online and offline.”



Draft Joint  
Statement - UN...



High Level Event  
on Supporting...

Attachments omitted as  
duplicates

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s 22 1(a)(ii)

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**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Saturday, 21 September 2013 8:34 AM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii) Gee, Stephen  
**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** RE: Further details on UNGA civil society meeting to be hosted by President Obama [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Thanks s 22 – I have let US Government know.

Best

s 22 1(a)(ii)

**From:** s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Sent:** Friday, 20 September 2013 3:04 AM  
**To:** s 22 1(a)(ii) King, Philippa; Gee, Stephen; s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** s 22 1(a)(ii) Campbell, Noel; s 22 1(a)(ii)  
**Subject:** RE: Further details on UNGA civil society meeting to be hosted by President Obama [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s 22 1(a)(ii)

Grateful if you could please inform relevant US contacts that Australia will join the statement on the promotion and protection of civil society. We have consulted relevant agencies.

cheers

s 22 1(a)(ii)

s 22 1(a)(ii)  
Desk Officer

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Remainder of e-mail trail omitted as duplicate of pp. 9-10.